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ABSTRACT

An investigation has been made of the cause, extent, and administrative effect of the use of non-faculty athletic coaches--individuals not employed as professional staff members in the districts in which they coach--in small (fewer than 360 students) public high schools in Wisconsin during the 1983-1984 school year. The hiring of these people may be attributed primarily to the unwillingness of certified staff members to coach because of dissatisfaction with various aspects of the job, especially the time required, the relatively low compensation, and the attitude of students. The use of non-faculty coaches has increased more than 400 percent between 1977-1978 and 1983-1984. Seventy percent of small high schools in Wisconsin employ them. Administrators have expressed general satisfaction with the performance of non-faculty coaches, believing their employment necessary for the existence of adequate athletic programs. The chief problems arising from the use of these coaches lie in the area of effective supervision of students and the need to relate athletics to the overall school program. (Author/TE)

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Non-Faculty Coaches in Small High Schools

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This report was presented on August 15, 1985, at the National Conference of Professors of Educational Administration, held at Mississippi State University.

Abstract

Investigation has been made of the cause, extent, and administrative impact of the use of non-faculty coaches--individuals not employed as professional staff members in the district in which they coach--in small (fewer than 360 students) public high schools in Wisconsin during the 1983-1984 school year. The hiring of these people may be attributed primarily to the unwillingness of certificated staff members to coach because of dissatisfaction with various aspects of the job, especially the time required, the relatively low compensation, and the attitude of students. The use of non-faculty coaches has increased more than 400 percent between 1977-1978 and 1983-1984. Seventy percent of small high schools in Wisconsin employ them. Administrators have expressed general satisfaction with the performance of non-faculty coaches, believing their employment necessary for the existence of adequate athletic programs. The chief problems arising from the use of these coaches lie in the area of effective supervision of students and the need to relate athletics to the overall school program.

Non-Faculty Coaches in Small Schools

This study explores the cause, extent, and impact of the use of non-faculty coaches, individuals who are not teachers or administrators in the district in which they coach, in small, rural Wisconsin high schools during the 1983-1984 school year. The study constitutes part of a larger study covering all high schools in Wisconsin, and the material presented here includes relevant comparisons with large districts. Attention centers, however, on those schools that the Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Association (WIAA), the governing body for public high school and junior high school athletic programs, has designated "Class C" schools. This class encompasses the 177 smallest high schools in the state, virtually all rural, with student enrollment during the year covered by this study ranging from 35 to 358.

Several writers have noted causes for the shortage of certified coaches who wish to coach.[1] Declining enrollment, with consequent financial restrictions and layoffs of young faculty members who would be most likely to want to coach, clearly contributes to the problem. The demand for more coaches in girls' teams, however, accentuates the impact of declining enrollment and appears to be the most important single cause of the shortage. Although empirical data on the influence of Title IX are elusive, information from Wisconsin's neighboring state Minnesota shows the growth of girls' sports during the 1970's. From 1971-72 to 1980-81, the total number of girls' teams participating in interscholastic sports rose from 424 to 2,809. By 1980-81, girls' teams constituted 45 percent of all interscholastic teams.[2]

Experts in physical education have cited several reasons why certified coaches no longer wished to coach despite the demand for their services.[3] Reasons include the difficulties of trying to coach too many sports; dissatisfaction with coaching salaries; the desire to spend more time with the family; the unimportance of extra income; disgust with the lack of dedication of contemporary high school athletes; discouragement over community pressure; failure to win; frustration over excessive competition for facility use; a desire for further education; and anger over pressure to make an individual sport a "year round" enterprise.

The extent of the use of non-faculty personnel has elicited much comment but little empirical information.[3] Most observers appear to agree with Adams' assertion that the use of non-faculty coaches is now a "way of life" in high school interscholastic sports.[4] Numerous states, Wisconsin included, have granted waivers to districts so that uncertified coaches may be hired. The WIAA had projected more than 1,500 non-certified non-faculty coaches for the state during the 1983-1984 school year, an increase of more than 400 percent over the actual figure for 1977-1978.[5]

As a means of minimizing reliance on non-faculty coaches, writers in physical education have suggested various ways for administrators to keep certified teachers in coaching positions. Suggestions include emphasizing the necessity of coaching when hiring teachers; using a continuing contract that requires the teacher to continue coaching; increasing coaching salaries; drafting staff members; hiring coaches

from substitute ranks; and soliciting the return of retired coaches.[6]

If administrators decide to hire a non-faculty coach, they must give attention to the best means of recruitment. Among those suggested are personal contact, newspaper advertisements, contact with local colleges, and placement services.[7]

The actual impact of the non-faculty coach on the school has received considerable notice. Although extensive surveys are lacking, most observers have concluded that non-faculty coaches form the only foundation on which many athletic programs can be maintained. The problems caused by non-faculty coaches, however, have drawn much attention. Court decisions have held administrators and schools responsible for supervision of extracurricular activities.[8] Thus many writers have worried about the use of unqualified or irresponsible coaches. Two authors epitomize the concern in their warning that "a time bomb ticks away minutes to disaster in interscholastic athletics."[9]

Even under the best of conditions, schools have many spheres of influence and interest, often conflicting, and a major problem facing administrators is that of bringing together professionally a teaching staff.[10] The addition of non-faculty members to staffs can make the problem more complex. Observers have worried about non-faculty members' ability to exercise responsibilities required for supervision;[11] comprehension of rules, regulations, and procedures;[12] competence in various technical duties;[13] and attitude, personality, and moral fiber.[14] Most writers who present problems provide various suggestions for alleviating them, usually involving in-service training and orientation.

In this investigation, we have used the various studies cited to develop questions. This study begins with a report of the causes of why some teachers are no longer willing to coach. Next, attention is given to the extent of the use of non-faculty coaches in Wisconsin. We then report data on employment of non-faculty coaches, on methods used to recruit certified coaches, on methods to recruit non-faculty coaches, on boys' and girls' sports, and on the relationship between non-faculty coaches in general and non-faculty head coaches. Third, we report on Wisconsin principals' views on advantages of using non-faculty coaches, on current problems, on concerns for the future, and on ways to maximize the benefits from their employment. We end the report with a discussion of findings.

Methods

On October 1, 1984, a questionnaire consisting of items in the areas of the cause, extent, and impact of non-faculty coaches during the school year 1983-1984 was sent to the principals of all 423 public high schools in Wisconsin. The questionnaire encouraged free comments by respondents. The Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Association had publicized the questionnaire and included its official endorsement of the survey in the September 7, 1984, edition of the WIAA Bulletin, a publication sent to all principals, as well as to coaches and athletic directors, in the state. The investigators sent a follow-up post card on October 8, 1984, thanking respondents and requesting quick responses from those who had not yet returned the questionnaire. We had planned an additional follow-up, but the high response rate made unnecessary its use.

Of the 423 public high schools contacted, 380, or 90 percent, responded by the deadline. Of the 177 Class C schools, the focus of this study, 168, or 95 percent, responded. (Response rates for Class A schools, with enrollments from 744 to 2,517 students, was 83 percent and Class B schools, with enrollments from 360 to 768 students, 90 percent.)

Results

Causes of Non-Faculty Coaching

Table 1 provides an overview of responses of Class C principals to the question, "Why are experienced teachers no longer willing to coach?" Responses highlighted areas involving dislike of the time away from families, bothersome duties, and compensation for coaching. The distaste of almost half the respondents for the "nature of today's athlete" also stood out.

Insert Table 1 about here

The relative ranking of responses revealed no major differences among schools by class. In two areas, however, the actual percentage of the Class C respondents differed notably from those in the other schools. Class C school principals were far more likely than other principals to cite excessive community pressure as a reason. Only about a fourth of principals in Classes A and B schools specified this problem. The association between school size and community pressure is highly significant ($P<.001$); as size of school decreases, the

influence of community pressure on teachers' decisions to leave coaching increases. The desire to go back to school accounts for the defection from coaching of far fewer Class C teachers than of teachers in Classes A (39 percent) or B (28 percent).

Extent of Non-Faculty Coaching

Respondents from all classes of schools--representing 90 percent of all schools in the state--reported using a total of 2,082 non-faculty coaches for the year 1983-1984. As noted previously, our definition of non-faculty coaches included certified people who did not have professional positions in the district. The Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Association excluded certified people from its definition of non-faculty coaches in its 1977-78 study, so the figure reported here cannot be compared directly. However, 30 percent of the non-faculty coaches in this study held certification. Adjusting for the response to our survey, we find an increase substantially more than 400 percent in the number of non-certified non-faculty coaches between 1977-78 and 1983-84. In any case, inspection of staffing reports suggests that almost one fourth of coaches in Wisconsin, certified and non-certified, are non-faculty coaches. Approximately 70 percent of responding Class C schools employed non-faculty coaches in 1983-1984, compared with 80 percent of Class B schools and 89 percent of Class A schools.

School districts displayed wariness toward the use of non-faculty coaches. They sought to keep coaching substantially in the hands of experienced teachers. Table 2 shows the means employed by Class C high schools. Overwhelmingly, administrators emphasized the importance

of coaching to prospective certified teachers. Comments indicated that they definitely preferred hiring those teachers who were willing to coach.

Insert Table 2 about here

The differences in order of practice of particular methods among various classes of school were insignificant with one exception. The use of the continuing contract which requires the individual to coach as well as to teach unless the district deems otherwise was far more common in Class C schools than in larger schools. The smaller the school, the more likely it made use of the continuing contract ($p < .02$).

Twenty-four percent of all non-faculty coaches in Class C schools held certification as teachers. Class C schools did not differ significantly from schools in A and B classes. For all schools, finding certified coaches constituted a problem. Eighty-six percent of Class C schools (89 percent of all schools) reported difficulties in finding such coaches. A greater number of teams in larger schools appeared to result in a larger number of non-faculty coaches. While 51 percent of Class C schools reported at least one certified non-faculty coach, 61 percent of Class B and 79 percent of Class A schools used at least one such coach.

When certified people cannot be found, schools must recruit non-faculty members. As Table 3 indicates, word-of-mouth predominated as a recruiting service for Class C schools (as well as for schools

in larger classes). No exact data are available on individuals recruited, but they ranged from school janitors to affluent professionals. For Class C schools, many of the coaches were recent high school graduates who had participated in athletics.

Insert Table 3 about here

A greater number of boys' teams results in a greater number of boys' coaches than girls' coaches. Class C schools, however, use proportionately more non-faculty coaches in boys' sports than in girls'--59 percent, in comparison with 42 percent. In Class B schools 56 percent of the non-faculty coaches coached boys' sports. and 44 percent coached girls' sports. Class A schools reported using 52 percent for boys' sports and 48 percent for girls' sports. A significant relationship ($P < .05$) exists between size of school and number of non-faculty coaches in sports of each sex; the smaller the school the greater proportion coaching boys' sports and the smaller the proportion coaching girls' sports.

Although they revealed a lower percentage of non-faculty coaches in girls' sports than did larger schools, Class C schools employed a larger proportion of non-faculty coaches who served as head coaches. In Class C schools 28 percent of the non-faculty boys' coaches were head coaches and 34 percent of the non-faculty girls' coaches were head coaches. A comparison of all non-faculty head coaches between Class C schools and larger schools reveals a highly significant difference ($P < .001$): Class C schools used

more of their non-faculty coaches as head coaches (31 percent) than did the larger schools (23 percent).

Impact

We have focused attention on four facets of the impact of non-faculty coaches on high schools in Wisconsin: The advantages gained by their use; the current problems they cause; concerns over possible problems for the future; and actions taken by administrators to make as beneficial as possible the use of non-faculty coaches.

The use of non-faculty coaches allows Class C schools to keep the athletic program in existence. As Table 4 indicates, maintenance of the athletic program itself and of its quality constituted the major value of using non-faculty coaches. Important, but of less consequence, were the effects of improving quality and increasing offerings. Small rural schools did not differ significantly from larger schools with respect to any items.

Insert Table 4 about here

The current problems occasioned by the use of non-faculty coaches in Class C schools may be examined in Table 5. No single problem caused apprehension in more than a quarter of Class C principals. Clearly, none saw serious current problems, although supervision was noted as a problem most often, as it was by other class school respondents. Despite the high volume of warnings about legal hazards, the item in the questionnaire concerning legal liability

elicited evidence of hardly any worry.

Insert Table 5 about here

Concerns for the future elicited from principals a greater volume of responses than did ostensible current problems, although as Table 6 indicates, no concern troubled as many as half the respondents. Supervision of students led the concerns for the future. The issue of legal liability produced more concern than it did as a current problem, but it still ranked relatively low. The attitude toward treatment of injuries revealed the largest differences between future concerns and current problems, ranking second as a concern. It may be noted here that 76 percent of responding Class C schools had liability insurance and 8 percent required evidence of personal liability insurance before hiring. The problems and concerns of the Class C principals followed the order generally of principals of larger schools.

Insert Table 6 about here

To obviate possible problems, many schools provide assistance and guidance for their non-faculty coaches. As Table 7 indicates, the issue of care for injuries and issues involving greater technical knowledge and understanding of administrative policies and responsibilities carried weight. The order of importance of activities to

help non-faculty coaches differed little between Class C schools and larger schools except with respect to developing a coaching handbook, upon which larger schools placed greater emphasis.

Insert Table 7 about here

Discussion

The cause, extent, and impact of non-faculty coaches in rural schools in Wisconsin has received attention in this study. Although the study has been limited to one state, it should serve to provide data that will be useful in guiding other studies.

Declining enrollment, school retrenchment, and especially the impact of Title IX underlie the lack of an adequate number of certified coaches. The main immediate cause, however, is the unwillingness of qualified coaches to continue coaching if they can escape. The desire to spend more time with their families constitutes the most important cause. Inadequate salaries for coaching, the burden of too many sports, the nature of contemporary athletes, and excessive community pressure are among the influences that disuade teachers from continuing to coach.

The influence of excessive community pressure in Class C areas deserves comment because it carries much more weight than it does in larger suburban and urban districts. It appears likely that the school's place as a source of entertainment in rural society is greater than it is in areas with many competing interests. The school

becomes in many ways the social center of the community and a central means of identification for citizens. High school sports become a vital activity in the community, and the intense interest in them--extending even to such questions as which students should have playing time--encourage interference that lessens coaches' enjoyment of their jobs. Rural citizens may feel far more competent in judging athletics than in judging academic programs, although the closeness of the community schools probably intensifies pressure in all areas.

If excessive community pressure plays a major role in inducing teachers to leave coaching in rural areas, the lack of opportunities to pursue higher education without enormous travel and possibly unpaid leave may serve to keep some teachers on their jobs as coaches in rural areas. Their suburban and metropolitan counterparts, usually close to colleges, can leave coaching more easily while continuing to draw teaching income. Ironically, perhaps, lack of higher educational opportunities reduces the number of certified rural coaches who might leave coaching.

The extent of the use of non-faculty coaches appears substantial and the great increase in the past six years in the state suggests continuing growth. Administrators evinced their desire to keep certified coaches. Some means, such as the emphasis on coaching as a factor when hiring new teachers, the drafting of qualified staff members to coach, and the use of a contract that ties individuals to coaching as long as the board desires, may create additional problems. Coaches who coach because they must coach may be bad coaches, certified or not, and the consequences to student athletes may be more detrimental

than that created by enthusiastic and capable non-faculty coaches. If willingness and ability to coach constitutes a main criterion in hiring people whose primary responsibilities nominally will be in teaching, the basic functions of the school could be distorted. One suspects that in many rural areas of Wisconsin such distortion may be occurring.

The fact that Class C schools had a larger proportion of non-faculty coaches serving as head coaches than did larger schools indicates--as indeed does their substantial reliance on continuing contracts--that Class C schools have more serious problems in finding qualified coaches. To use non-faculty coaches as assistant coaches may allow close supervision and help them develop. To employ these people as head coaches signifies, however, an allocation of substantial individual responsibility.

In the eyes of respondents, the use of non-faculty coaches allows schools to maintain their athletic programs. Certainly, despite the warnings of many writers of the dire consequences of using these coaches, so far no empirical evidence has emerged to indicate that their use has caused any significant damage to athletic programs.

The relative indifference of principals toward the issue of legal liability remains puzzling. Yet until some individual sues a district or an administrator, the issue probably lacks much salience for most people, and the widespread use of liability insurance appears to create a safety net. It may be noted, however, that most respondents may have realized that virtually all the administrative issues they noted carry legal implications.

The evident success of non-faculty coaches in allowing schools

to field athletic teams has consequences for coaching and the teaching profession itself. The success of these people brings into question not only licensing programs but the professional status of coaching. If the various orientation devices and in-service training is adequate in many cases, why depend on certification--at least as it now exists--at all?

Although the results of this study certainly belie many of the criticisms of the use of non-faculty coaches, we believe that care must be taken, as it is in many of the schools surveyed, to provide close supervision and to give assistance to them, not only with respect to their particular duties and responsibilities, but with respect to their place within the school system.

Footnotes

1. See Samuel H. Adams, "A Look at Athletics in the Eighties." Interscholastic Athletic Administration 7 (Summer 1981): 16-17; Duane Carlson, "Coaching Positions Related to Fewer Teaching Positions," Interscholastic Athletic Administration 6 (Fall 1979): 10-15; and Harry Ostro, "Meeting the Coaching Shortage," Scholastic Coach 50 (January 1981): 10.

2. Minnesota State High School League, "Increase in Girls' Sports Participation by Activity." Anoka, Minnesota, n.d.

3. See Larry S. Arason, "Solving the Walk-On Coach Problem," Interscholastic Athletic Administration 6 (Winter 1979): 10-11; Don Arnold, "Staffing the Interscholastic Athletic Program," NASSP Bulletin 62 (September 1978): 75-87; Warren C. Bowlus, "Should Athletic Administrators Hire Non-Teaching Coaches?" Interscholastic Athletic Administration 6 (Fall 1979): 1; James Dutcher, "Administration: Understanding the Unique Problems of the Small School Program," Interscholastic Athletic Administration 8 (Summer 1982): 15; Orv Schwankel, "Finding Qualified Personnel to Fill Staff Assignments," Interscholastic Athletic Administration 2 (Fall 1976): 25; and Alan Weiss, "Coaching Shortage," Interscholastic Athletic Administration 6 (Fall 1979): 9.

4. Adams, "A Look"; R. Hardy, "Administrative Guidelines for Volunteer Coaches," Scholastic Coach 54 (January 1985): 16.

5. Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Association, "WIAA Non-Teacher Coach Report Summary," Stevens Point, Wisconsin, 1983.

6. Warren C. Bowlus, "Should Athletic Administrators Hire Non-teaching Coaches?" Interscholastic Athletic Administration 6 (Fall 1979): 11; Samuel H. Adams, "Training and Using Volunteer Coaches," Interscholastic Athletic Administration 7 (November 1981): 10-14. John Youngblood, "Providing Quality Coaches," Interscholastic Athletic Administration 6 (Winter 1979): 14-15; Ostro, "Meeting the Coaching Shortage."

7. Bowlus, "Should Athletic Administrators Hire Non-Teaching Coaches?" Adams,"Training and Using."

8. E. Edmund Reutter, Jr., The Law of Public Education, 3rd ed. (Mineola, New York: The Foundation Press, 1985), pp. 350-352.

9. Delbert K. Clear and Martha Bagley, "Coaching Athletics: A Tort Just Waiting for a Judgement?" NOLPE School Law Journal 10 (1982): 184-192.

10. See E. Mark Hanson, Educational Administration and Organizational Behavior, 2nd. ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon), 1985, pp. 93-116; Karl E. Weick, "Educational Organizations as Loosely Coupled Systems," Administrative Science Quarterly 21 (March 1976): 1-19.

11. Mike McGrevy, "Litigation and the Coach," Scholastic Coach 50 (November 1980): 10.

12. Adams, "Training"; Larry S. Arason, "Solving the Walk-On Coach Problem," Interscholastic Athletic Administration 6 (Winter 1979): 10-11.

13. Arason; McGrevey; Hardy; Boyd Baker, "Sports Medicine: Legal Implications Associated with Management of Injuries," Interscholastic Athletic Administration 9 (Winter 1982): 12-13.

14. Richard Ball, "Lessons Learned from Litigation," Interscholastic Athletic Administration 7 (Fall 1980): 18; and Arason.

Table 1

Responses of Class C Principals as to Why Teachers Are No Longer Willing to Coach

Reason Suggested	Percent Responding Yes
1. Desire to spend more time with their families	87
2. Trying to coach too many sports	54
3. Dissatisfaction with coaching salary	51
4. The nature of today's athlete	48
5. Income no longer needed	42
6. Excessive community pressure	41
7. Failure to win	26
8. Excessive competition for facility use	19
9. Desire to further their education	19
10. Pressure to make their sport "year round"	13

Table 2

Methods Used by Class C Schools to
Recruit Certified Coaches

Recruiting Method	Percent Using
1. Emphasized the importance of coaching needs when hiring teachers	61
2. Hired coaches from the substitute teacher ranks	36
3. Drafted staff members	32
4. Used a continuing contract	28
5. Solicited the return of retired coaches	26
6. Reduced expectations for a year round program	14
7. Substantially increased coaching salaries	13
8. Dropped teams and/or sports	11
9. Reduced teaching loads as incentives for staff coaches	2

Table 3

Methods Used by Class C Schools to
Recruit Non-Faculty Coaches

Methods Used	Percent Indicating Use
1. Word of mouth/personal contact	85
2. Newspaper advertisement	45
3. Local colleges/universities	23
4. Placement services	13

Table 4

Positive Aspects of the Use of Non-Faculty Coaches in Class C Schools

Non-Faculty Coaches Have Allowed Your School to...	Percent Responding Yes
1. Maintain its athletic program	81
2. Maintain quality in its athletic program	67
3. Improve the quality of its athletic program	28
4. Increase the offerings in its athletic program	21

Table 5

Problems in Utilization of Class C
Non-Faculty Coaches

Problem	Percent Having Experienced
1. Supervision of students	24
2. Understanding the role of sports in education	24
3. Maturity and emotional stability	21
4. Knowledge of school and state association rules/regulations	19
5. Competence in sport knowledge	17
6. Community/parent-school relations	16
7. Loss of administrative control	14
8. Treatment of injuries	13
9. Ability to work with youngsters	13
10. Overemphasis on winning	12
11. Commitment to position and program	11
12. Legal liability	7
13. Moral character	6

Table 6

Concerns in the Utilization of Class C
Non-Faculty Coaches

Concern		Percent Expressing Concern
1.	Supervision of students	49
2.	Treatment of injuries	46
3.	Understanding of the role of sports in education	44
4.	Knowledge of school and state association rules and regulations	40
5.	Maturity and emotional stability	38
6.	Competence in sport knowledge	34
7.	Community/parent-school relations	33
8.	Legal liability	32
9.	Ability to work with youngsters	32
10.	Overemphasis on winning	25
11.	Loss of administrative control	25
12.	Commitment to position and program	24
13.	Moral character	16

Table 7

Activities Provided by Class C Schools
to Help Non-Faculty Coaches

Activities Provided	Percent Utilizing
1. Developed a plan for emergency medical care	52
2. Provided an orientation on district policies and expectations	51
3. Required attendance at clinics, workshops and inservices	44
4. Developed job descriptions for all coaching positions	33
5. Developed a coaching handbook	32
6. Developed a set of coaching qualifications	16